



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Summary

About this Release

Developing measures of social capital across individuals and communities has attracted a large amount of attention and policy interest. However, this is a difficult task. The enumeration of the 2006 General Social Survey provides an important opportunity to explore a range of measures of social capital and see how they are related to each other. A number of the questions used to capture aspects of social capital have not been asked before in such a large survey, whereas others have not been collected alongside as wide a range of demographic and socio-economic information. To explore measures of social capital, the analysis presented in this paper is structured around four research questions:

1. What is the incidence of and associations between the social capital items?
2. Are there unobserved factors that explain the variance across the social capital data items?
3. Is it feasible to produce meaningful composite items from the dimensions of social capital?
4. How do the social capital measures vary across demographic groups?

In answering the above research questions, the results presented in this paper show that although a single measure of social capital is useful in summarising the patterns across the population, there is sufficient variation to warrant a number of dimensions of social capital to be analysed separately.